

Memorandum

To: Rich Nye and Jo Ellen Shaeffer (Utah State Board of Education)

CC: Tiffany Stanley, Cydnee Carter, Jared Wright (Utah State Board of Education)

From: Leslie Keng and Scott Marion (Center for Assessment)

Date: 5/30/2017

Re: Utah School Accountability System Standard Setting Process

On May 16-18, 2017, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) with support from the Center for Assessment convened a series of meetings to implement a standard setting process for the Utah school accountability system. Over the course of three days, committees of school accountability system stakeholders from across the state of Utah reviewed and revised policy descriptors (PDs) and school performance level descriptors (SPLDs). They also recommended threshold scores for overall school ratings that will be used to assign letter grades to schools based on their performance on the indicators in the Utah school accountability system. This memorandum provides a high-level summary of the standard setting process and outcomes.

Overview

Part 11 of Utah’s Senate Bill 220 (SB220) provides detailed specifications of the requirements for Utah’s new school accountability system. The statute includes the performance indicators on which a school’s overall rating is based for elementary and middle schools (Section 53A-1-1106), and for high schools (Section 53A-1-1107). It specifies how points for the various indicators should be awarded in the calculation of a school’s overall rating (Section 53A-1-1108 through 53A-1-1110). It also provides the grade and labels for a school’s overall rating (Section 53A-1-1105). The letter grades and associated labels are as follows:

- “A” represents an exemplary school;
- “B” represents a commendable school;
- “C” represents a typical school;
- “D” represents a developing school; and,
- “F” grade represents a critical needs school.

SB220, however, does not specify what the threshold scores are for schools to be assigned each grade or performance label. Instead, it requires USBE to engage in a “criteria setting process” to establish performance level threshold scores. In establishing the threshold scores, USBE was

required to solicit and consider input from stakeholders, including legislators, the governor, representatives from local school boards, other representatives from school districts (including superintendents), other representatives from charter school governing boards, teachers, and parents (Section 53A-1-1113.5).

USBE, with support from the Center for Assessment, designed and implemented an accountability standard setting process to fulfill this statutory requirement. The process involved a well-defined approach to obtain threshold score recommendations from the various stakeholders outlined in the SB220. The process included three main steps:

1. Establishment of Policy Descriptors (PDs)
2. Specification of School Performance Level Descriptors (SPLDs)
3. Recommendation of Performance Level Threshold Scores

The following sections provide descriptions of each of the three main steps. The overarching goal of the standard setting process was to establish performance levels that are meaningful and reflect the state's vision for the accountability system.

Policy Descriptor (PD) Meeting

On the evening of Tuesday, May 16, 2017, a committee of key legislators and state board members convened to review and revise the Policy Descriptors (PDs) for the Utah school accountability system. PDs are high-level statements about each performance level. They should be linked to Utah's goals and policy priorities and identify the most critical outcomes that are valued and considered non-negotiable. PDs should also be succinct and clear, so that anyone can read and understand them without technical jargon. They serve as the basis for the more detailed school performance level descriptors (SPLDs), which would be reviewed and revised on the following day.

Prior to the PD meeting, USBE with support from the Center for Assessment drafted preliminary PDs as starting points for the committee. During the meeting, committee members reviewed and discussed as a group the PD for each performance level in light of the legislative requirements and the state's goal and vision for its new accountability system. The committee made several important revisions to the draft PDs and approved them for use by the SPLD committee on the following day. The PDs approved by the committee were:

- An exemplary or "A" school exceeds expectations in academic achievement AND growth (AND postsecondary readiness, for high school). Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be considered outstanding.

- A commendable or “B” school meets expectations on academic achievement AND growth (AND postsecondary readiness, for high school). Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be satisfactory to strong.
- A typical or “C” school meets expectations on academic achievement OR growth (OR postsecondary readiness, for high school). Equitable educational opportunities at the school are also adequate.
- A developing or “D” school partially meets expectations for academic achievement OR growth (OR postsecondary readiness, for high school). Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate.
- A critical needs or “F” school has not met expectations for academic achievement AND growth (AND postsecondary readiness, for high school). Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate.

The PDs were modified slightly during the school performance level descriptor meeting (described below) and the final policy descriptors are found in Appendix C.

School Performance Level Descriptor (SPLD) Meeting

On the afternoon of Wednesday, May 17, 2017, members of the Utah’s Assessment and Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (AAPAC) convened to work on the school performance level descriptors (SPLDs) for Utah’s school accountability system. SPLDs are more detailed descriptions of the characteristics of schools in each performance level. There is a range of performance expectations associated with schools in each performance level. The SPLDs are meant to describe a school in the middle of each performance level. The charge for this committee was to review and approve the SPLDs for use in the performance level setting meeting on the following day.

Prior to the SPLD meeting, USBE and the Center for Assessment drafted preliminary SPLDs as starting points for the SPLD committee. Separate SPLDs were written for elementary/middle schools and for high schools. During the meeting, the approved PDs from the previous day were shared with the committee. The committee then examined the SPLDs to ensure that they reflected Utah’s vision for the school accountability system in the PDs, described the expectations in the different performance levels, and were clearly articulated for the performance level setting committee. The specific question posed to the committee was:

- Are the key distinguishing features in each of the SPLDs clearly articulated? That is, if given information about schools’ performances, could you use these SPLDs to identify the differences between:
 - A schools vs. B schools;
 - B schools vs. C schools;
 - C schools vs. D schools; and,

- D schools vs. F schools?

Each committee member reviewed the preliminary SPLDs independently. Committee members were then divided into table groups of 3-5 people to share their thoughts on the SPLDs and recommend revisions to each SPLD. Finally, the committee reconvened as a group to revise the SPLDs and approve them for use for the performance level setting meeting.

Appendix A provides the annotated agenda for the SPLD meeting. Appendix C shows the final SPLDs for elementary/middle schools and for high schools. Please note that the performance level setting committee made additional revisions to the SPLDs on the following day. The SPLDs shown in Appendix C reflected those revisions.

Performance Level Setting Meeting

On Thursday, May 18, 2017, a committee of AAPAC members, policymakers, parents, educators, association representatives, and technical experts convened to recommend performance level threshold scores for overall school ratings in the Utah school accountability system. The threshold scores will be used to assign letter grades to schools based on their performance on various indicators specified in statute. The committee followed an iterative value-based judgmental process that included multiple rounds of review, ratings and feedback to arrive at threshold score recommendations. The committee also made additional revisions to the SPLDs so that they reflected the recommended threshold scores. Such slight revisions to the descriptors are common in a standard setting process to ensure coherence between the data and the narrative descriptors.

Prior to the performance level setting meeting, USBE prepared two key sets of documents for the meeting: the ordered school profile lists (OSP) and detailed school profiles. An OSP is list of all schools in Utah, ordered by the percentage of total points earned on the legislatively-mandated accountability indicators. This list also included information about the number and percentage of points earned for each indicator by each school. A detailed school profile is a report that includes additional empirical data about a given school, including test participation rates, detailed breakdowns of each accountability indicator by subject area, and historical demographic and performance data, for all students and by subgroups.

During the performance level setting meeting, the committee members first reviewed and discussed the PDs and SPLDs approved by the committees on the previous days. They then participate in two rounds of judgments and discussions to arrive at recommended performance level threshold scores. In Round 1, the goal was to identify probable ranges for each threshold score (i.e., “range-finding”) using the OSP. This step was done independently by each committee member based on his or her interpretation of the SPLDs. In Round 2, the goal was to locate the threshold score for each performance level (i.e., “pinpointing”) within the respective

probable ranges identified in Round 1. This step was done in table groups (of 3-5 people) by reviewing the detailed school profiles for every school within the probable ranges. Because of time constraints, each committee member (in Round 1) and table group (in Round 2) was assigned to review and provided recommendations for only one of the school levels: either for elementary/middle schools or for high schools. Appendix B provides the annotated agenda for the performance level setting meeting.

The final committee-recommended threshold scores, expressed as the percentage of total points earned on all of the accountability indicators, and associated impact data (i.e., the percentage of Utah schools in each performance level based on 2016 performance) are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Recommended Threshold Scores and Impact Data for Elementary/Middle Schools

Performance Level	Recommended Threshold Score ¹ (Expressed as % of total points earned)	Impact Data (% of schools in each category based on 2016 performance)
A (Exemplary)	63.25	7%
B (Commendable)	55.0	24%
C (Typical)	43.5	49%
D (Developing)	35.5	15%
F (Critical Needs)	--	5%

Table 2: Recommended Threshold Scores and Impact Data for High Schools

Performance Level	Recommended Threshold Score ² (Expressed as % of total points earned)	Impact Data (Based on 2016 performance)
A (Exemplary)	64	13%
B (Commendable)	57	34%
C (Typical)	46	36%
D (Developing)	38	13%
F (Critical Needs)	--	4%

Next Steps

USBE will forward the recommendations by the committees, including the PDs, SPLDs, and performance level threshold scores, to the Board of Education for approval. The Board will

¹ These recommended threshold scores were computed as the median Round 2 cut score recommendations across all table groups assigned to review elementary/middle schools. As such, decimal values are possible and they are provided in Table 1 without rounding.

² Only one table group (with five committee members) was assigned to review and pinpoint the high school threshold scores in Round 2. The values in this column represent this group's recommendations.

report to the Utah State Legislature in the fall of 2017 on the performance level threshold scores, including rationale and documentation of the procedures used to develop the performance thresholds.

Appendix A – Annotated Agenda for the SPLD Meeting

- Date and Time: May 17, 2017, 1:00pm-4:00pm
- Location: Utah State Board of Education, 250 E 500 S SLC, UT, 84114 (Basement West)
- Committee Members: AAPAC Members
- Objective: Review and approve the school performance level descriptors (SPLDs) that will be used in the performance level setting meeting.

Time	Activity
1:00 p.m.	<p>Welcome, Introductions and Overview (30 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome AAPAC members (USB E) • Quick introduction of all participants (All) • Overview of legislative requirements related to the performance levels in the school accountability system (USB E) • Overview of accountability standard setting process, highlighting the important role of SPLDs (Center)
1:30 p.m.	<p>Review and Discussion of Policy Descriptors (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief introduction to the policy descriptors – recap highlight of discussion from the meeting on the evening of 5/16 (USB E) • Committee members review policy descriptors (All) • Committee discuss as a group how the policy descriptors relate to their expectations (Center facilitates)
1:45 p.m.	<p>Independent Review of Draft SPLDs (30 minutes, Center facilitates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members are provided with the draft SPLDs and independently review the SPLDs for all levels. They are encouraged to take notes for the discussion to follow.
2:15 p.m.	<p>Break (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members who need more time may use the break to continue their review of the SPLDs.
2:30 p.m.	<p>Table Discussion of SPLDs: A and F Schools (15 minutes, Center facilitates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In table groups of 3-5 people, committee members share their thoughts on the SPLDs for A and F schools. • Each table should appoint a spokesperson who will summarize and present the table's discussion to the entire committee.
2:45p.m.	<p>Recommended Revisions to SPLDs: A and F Schools (20 minutes, Center facilitates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each spokesperson presents a summary the table's discussion. • The committee recommends initial revisions to the SPLDs for A and F schools.
3:05 p.m.	<p>Table Discussion of SPLDs: B, C, D Schools (15 minutes, Center facilitates)</p>

Time	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At their tables, committee members share their thoughts about the SPLDs for B, C, and D Schools. Each table's spokesperson takes notes.
3:20 p.m.	<p>Recommended Revisions to SPLDs: B, C, D Schools (20 minutes, Center facilitates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each spokesperson presents a summary the table's discussion. The committee recommends initial revisions to the SPLDs for B, C, and D schools.
3:40 p.m.	<p>Articulation and Approval of Pre-Performance Level Setting SPLDs (15 minutes, Center facilitates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee reviews, as a group, the revisions made to the SPLDs across all performance levels (i.e., A–F schools) and may make additional revisions as necessary. The committee approves (either by consensus or a majority vote with points of disagreement noted) the SPLDs for use in the performance-level setting meeting on Day 2 (note: the SPLDs may be tweaked on Day 2, but no more than that).
3:55 p.m.	<p>Wrap-Up and Next Steps (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process evaluation survey (Center to develop) Overview of Day 2 process (Center) Thank committee members for their hard work (USOE)
4:00 p.m.	SPLD Meeting Adjourned

Appendix B – Annotated Agenda for the Performance Level Setting Meeting

- Date and Time: May 18, 2017, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Location: Utah State Board of Education, 250 E 500 S SLC, UT 84114, in Basement West
- Committee: AAPAC Policymakers, Parents, Educators, Associations, Technical Experts
- Objective: Establish performance thresholds for overall school ratings that will be used to assign letter grades to schools based on their performance on the indicators in the Utah’s school accountability system

Time	Activity
9:00 a.m.	Welcome, Introductions and Overview (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome committee members and introductions(USBE) • Overview of legislative requirements related to the performance levels in the school accountability system (USBE)
9:30 a.m.	Training on PLDs, SPLDs, and standard setting (30 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of accountability standard setting process and training on the performance-level setting elements and activities (Center)
9:45 a.m.	Review of Policy Descriptors and SPLDs (45 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share policy descriptors and SPLDs with committee. • Give brief summary of how they were developed. Committee members who were on the SPLD committee (Day 1) are encouraged to share their experiences. • Committee members independently review policy descriptors and SPLDs • The committee discusses as a group the key distinguishing features in the SPLDs between the different performance levels.
10:30 a.m.	Break (15 minutes)
10:45 a.m.	Demonstration of Judgment Task (15 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator provides a detailed demonstration of judgment tasks with the ordered school profile (OSP) list, and answers questions about the judgment process.
11:00 a.m.	Round 1 Judgments (60 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members are provided with the complete OSP. Each committee member independently reviews the OSP and provides initial judgments of the threshold score for each cut. There should be four threshold scores in total.
12:00 p.m.	Lunch (60 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Round 1 judgment occurs during this time
1:00 p.m.	Round 1 Feedback and Discussion (45 minutes, Center facilitates)

Time	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facilitator shares feedback data about the Round 1 judgments. Feedback data includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Descriptive statistics</i>: mean, median, minimum, and maximum threshold scores based on the entire committee's judgments. <i>Panelist agreement data</i>: visual representation of where the committee's threshold scores are. <i>Impact data</i>: the % of schools that would be in each performance level based on the current recommended (median) cut scores by the committee. Committee members discuss in table groups the feedback data and the rationale for their threshold scores.
1:45 p.m.	Round 2 Judgments (30 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on their table discussions and the Round 1 feedback data, committee members provide, as a table, adjusted threshold score recommendation for each cut. These table recommendations will be turned in for the Center to calculate the median recommendations for elementary/middle and high schools
2:15 p.m.	Break (15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of Round 2 judgment occurs during this time
2:30 p.m.	Round 2 Feedback and Discussion (45 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facilitator shares feedback data about the Round 2 judgments. Committee members discuss in table groups the feedback data and any adjustments that they made to their threshold scores. Each table should identify a spokesperson to present a summary of their discussion with the entire committee. The spokesperson for each table presents a summary of the table discussions with the committee. Additional committee-level discussion may occur.
3:15 p.m.	Full Group Recommendations (30 minutes, Center facilitates) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the committee- and table-level discussions and the Round 2 feedback data, the committee makes final recommendations to their judgments of the threshold score for each cut.
3:45 p.m.	Wrap-Up and Next Steps (15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process evaluation survey (All) Share with committee the steps that will occur after the standard setting meeting (USBE) Thank committee members for their hard work (USBE)
4:00 p.m.	Performance-Level Setting Meeting Adjourned

Appendix C – Policy Descriptors and School Performance Level Descriptors

Elementary and Middle Schools

Exemplary School (“A” School)	
Policy Descriptor	An exemplary or “A” school exceeds expectations in academic achievement AND growth. Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be considered outstanding .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is exemplary (i.e., receives a grade of A) obtains a high number of points on all of the following three indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Commendable School (“B” School)	
Policy Descriptor	A commendable or “B” school meets expectations on academic achievement AND growth. Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be satisfactory to strong .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is commendable (i.e., receives a grade of B) obtains a high number of points on at least one of the following two indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science); OR • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science). <p>And obtains an adequate number of points on all of the following three indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science); AND • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science); AND • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Typical School ("C" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A typical or "C" school meets expectations on academic achievement OR growth. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are also adequate .
SPLDs	A school that is typical (i.e., receives a grade of C) obtains an adequate number of points on two of the following three indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Developing School ("D" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A developing or "D" school partially meets expectations for academic achievement OR growth. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate .
SPLDs	A school that is developing (i.e., receives a grade of D) obtains an adequate number of points on one of the following three indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Critical Needs School ("F" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A critical needs or "F" school has not met expectations for academic achievement AND growth. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate .
SPLDs	A school that has critical needs (i.e., receives a grade of F) obtains an adequate number of points on none of the following three indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

High Schools

Exemplary School (“A” School)	
Policy Descriptor	An exemplary or “A” school exceeds expectations in academic achievement AND growth AND postsecondary readiness. Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be considered outstanding .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is exemplary (i.e., receives a grade of A) obtains a high number of points on all of the following four indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Commendable School (“B” School)	
Policy Descriptor	A commendable or “B” school meets expectations on academic achievement AND growth AND postsecondary readiness. Equitable educational opportunities at the school should also be satisfactory to strong .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is commendable (i.e., receives a grade of B) obtains a high number of points performance on at least one of the following three indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) <p>And obtains an adequate number of points on all of the following four indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Typical School ("C" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A typical or "C" school meets expectations on academic achievement OR growth OR postsecondary readiness. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are also adequate .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is typical (i.e., receives a grade of C) obtains an adequate number of points on three of the following four indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Developing School ("D" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A developing or "D" school partially meets expectations for academic achievement OR growth OR postsecondary readiness. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate .
SPLDs	<p>A school that is developing (i.e., receives a grade of D) obtains an adequate number of points on one of the following four indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)

Critical Needs School ("F" School)	
Policy Descriptor	A critical needs or "F" school has not met expectations for academic achievement AND growth AND postsecondary readiness. Equitable educational opportunities at the school are not adequate .
SPLDs	<p>A school that has critical needs (i.e., receives a grade of F) obtains an adequate number of points on none of the following four indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement (as measured by performance on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science) • Academic growth (as measured by progress from year to year on the statewide assessment of ELA, math and science)

Critical Needs School ("F" School)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postsecondary readiness (as measured by graduation rates, college readiness assessments, and advance course work) • Equitable educational opportunities (as measured by academic growth for the lowest performing 25% of students and, if applicable, English learner progress)